

Upheaval in the East: Street Rallies and Other Alarms

Lithuanians Cry 'Freedom!' On Eve of Gorbachev Visit

By ESTHER B. FEIN
Special to The New York Times

VILNIUS, U.S.S.R., Jan. 10 — A day before President Mikhail S. Gorbachev is to arrive in Lithuania, tens of thousands of Lithuanians gathered here today in the center of their capital, carrying signs calling for "Independence for Lithuania," and chanting, "Freedom!"

Mr. Gorbachev decided to visit the republic to assess the mood among Lithuanians, particularly Communist Party members, after the local Communist Party voted last month to secede from the Soviet Communist Party.

Speakers and demonstrators at the rally today said they wanted Mr. Gorbachev to know that the decision by the Lithuanian Communists was widely popular in the republic and that many hoped it presaged a future break of the republic from the Soviet Union.

Speaker after speaker acknowledged that one goal of the demonstration, which was called by the popular politi-

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cal organization Sajudis, was to show through the Soviet and foreign press that an overwhelming majority of Lithuanians support the call for independence.

Gorbachev Softens Stance

"We want to be independent and free," Aloyzas Salkalas, a physics professor at Vilnius University, told a cheering crowd of nearly 25,000 people, who stood among placards and dozens of yellow, red and green Lithuanian flags. "We want to be as we were before the occupation in 1940. The central press says we're extremists. So let's show them that independence is the will of the people."

The official Soviet press has in fact



Tens of thousands rallied for independence in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.

Investors fearful of political turmoil in the Soviet Union have knocked down stock prices in Tokyo Stock Exchange by 3 percent in the last week. Business Day, page C2.

begin to portray the decision by the Lithuanian Communist Party as representative of local opinion, apparently in an attempt to prepare the Soviet public for the central party's response to the Lithuanian party's action. That response is likely to be acquiescence.

Mr. Gorbachev initially denounced the Lithuanian Communists for bowing to "extremist" pressures in their "illegal" and "illegitimate" vote in December to become independent of the central party in Moscow. The national press followed with condemnation of the "extremist" move.

But in a meeting last week with Lithuanian Communist Party leaders, Mr. Gorbachev indicated that he understood the motivation behind their move and that he would not try to force the Lithuanians to reverse their decision.

Tass Sees Predominant Attitude

And today, Radio Moscow said in a report from Vilnius that a poll had shown that 82 percent of Lithuanians supported their party's decision and that they blamed the sluggish central party apparatus in Moscow for leaving the Lithuanians no option.

The official press agency Tass reported today that the rally in Cathedral Square in Vilnius "reflects the attitude now predominant in the republic."

The central Communist Party decided to send a delegation to Lithuania after an emergency meeting of the Central Committee failed to agree on a response to the Lithuanian action, the first time in Soviet history that a local party organization has split from Moscow.

Pro-independence feeling also runs high in Latvia and Estonia, which, like Lithuania, were annexed by Stalin in 1940 after he had concluded a nonaggression pact with Hitler's Germany dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence.

Ideology Chief and Independence

Several members of the ruling Politburo and the Central Committee arrived in Lithuania early this week and have already begun to travel to Communist Party work collectives and citizens' meetings to question the local population and to deliver Moscow's message that defiance in Lithuania is going too far and too fast.

In all, the delegation is expected to include about 40 people. Mr. Gorbachev is scheduled to arrive Thursday, to meet with people throughout the republic and to deliver a speech Saturday to active Communist Party members.

In a meeting today at a collective farm outside Vilnius, the Communist Party ideology chief, Vadim A. Medvedev, told workers there that preserving the integrity of the Soviet Union and the unity of the Communist Party was fundamental to deciding any of the complex political questions facing the country.

His comments seemed to preclude



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independence of the Lithuanian Party and clearly of the republic.

The term "independence," while widely used these days in the republic, means different things to different people, and takes in a range of views that include complete secession from the Soviet Union to a sovereign Lithuanian state within a radically redefined union of totally voluntary member nations.

The leader of the newly independent Communist Party of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, said last month that the party needed to create conditions

that would allow Lithuania to secede from the Soviet Union if it so chooses. Mr. Brazauskas, who became vastly popular here for standing up to Moscow even when he was head of a dependent party organization, has never openly advocated secession, but rather has supported the right of each republic to exercise its constitutional guarantee to secede.

People here seem confident that the Gorbachev Government will not use force to coerce Lithuania into obeying Moscow's call for an end to talk of se-

cession and independence. But neither do people assert that such a goal would be achieved unimpeded. Already there is widespread questioning and speculation about what moves the Kremlin could take to try to force Lithuania to adhere to its will.

Several people today raised the possibility of some kind of economic sanctions against the republic by Moscow.

The main national evening news program, "Vremya," showed one worker who raised the subject when Yuri D. Maslyukov, a Politburo member, vis-

ited a plant here in Vilnius. Mr. Maslyukov tried to dismiss notion by saying that Moscow wanted to work with Lithuania, not against it.

Other people today said Lithuania would resist any sort of economic threat.

"Don't threaten us with an economic blockade," Albertas Zalatorius, a professor of Lithuanian literature, said at the demonstration today. "No blockade has ever succeeded in subjugating a people, and we have resisted hunger before."

U.N., Bowing to Soviets, Halts Its Baltic Contacts

By PAUL LEWIS
Special to The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 10 — Bowing to Soviet pressure, the United Nations Secretariat has agreed to suspend the informal contacts it has conducted for several months with Baltic nationalist groups seeking independence from Moscow, a senior official has announced.

The United Nations decision comes on the eve of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's visit to Lithuania, which was annexed by Stalin in 1940 along with Estonia and Latvia. The goal of Mr. Gorbachev's trip is to investigate the Party's decision to secede from the Soviet Communist Party.

The Secretariat's decision to stop meeting with Baltic nationalists when they visit New York was discussed by Assistant Secretary General James O. C. Jonah in an interview with The Toronto Globe and Mail earlier this week and confirmed by other officials

today. In the interview, Mr. Jonah, who had been a central figure in the Baltic talks, said the Soviet Union was angered when The New York Times published an article about the contacts in December. "The Soviets were very angry," he was quoted as saying. "Now we won't talk with any of them." Mr. Jonah is traveling and could not be reached for comment.

Calls It Embarrassing

In the interview, he accused Baltic nationalist leaders of exploiting their contacts with the United Nations and said "they really embarrassed the Secretary General."

The contacts were never publicly announced by any official of the United Nations.

The United Nations decision to end the contacts with the Baltic nationalists provoked an angry reaction from Baltic Americans who accused the organization of failing to defend the ideals of freedom and self-determina-

tion in its charter.

"This is a shocking submission to Soviet pressure which diminishes the effectiveness of the United Nations," said Margers Pinnis of the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations, one organization seeking United Nations help in winning self-determination for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Ojars E. Kalnins, spokesman for the Latvian American Association, called the United Nations decision "outrageous," saying it "follows a pattern of craven surrender to the Soviets."

Gintė Damusis of the Lithuanian Information Center said "it is scandalous to see United Nations officials running scared of Moscow."

Contacts Are Ended

Baltic Americans say the contacts were with the Office of Research and the Collection of Information, a division of the Secretariat headed by Mr. Jonah that briefs Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar on world trouble spots where he might be asked to

mediate. Officials of that division confirmed today that the contacts had ended, as Mr. Jonah said in the interview.

"Mr. Jonah's position is illogical," Mr. Pinnis said. "His office should keep up with events in the Baltic region because all the nationalist movements say the United Nations may have a role to play in securing a peaceful transition to independence."

The Soviet Union, which opposes independence for the Baltic republics while admitting their annexation was illegal, apparently considers that such contacts not only encourage the nationalist movements but also constitute interference in its internal affairs, officials say.

Under its charter the United Nations is barred from interfering in members' internal affairs, although the organization is pressing that prohibition as it sets international standards in fields like human rights and environmental protection.